



# **CHCHD News**

**Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department**

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## **Hamilton County Aims to Prepare for the Next Health Emergency**

*National Public Health Week March 23-30, 2007*

Chattanooga, TN– Public health threats, from bioterrorism and natural disasters to disease outbreaks, can happen quickly and without warning. To explore ways to protect individuals from public health threats, the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department is planning several activities during the observance of National Public Health Week, March 26-30, 2007.

As part of the weeklong observance, themed “Take the First Step: Individual Preparedness for Public Health Threats”, the Health Department is raising awareness about health emergencies and ways to stay prepared.

Despite growing threats and a host of awareness campaigns, Americans across the nation remain largely unprepared for public health emergencies in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and other recent events. According to [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), 91% of surveyed Americans said that it is important to be prepared for emergencies, but only 55% have taken steps to prepare themselves and their family for an emergency.

“Disaster Preparation means taking action to be ready for emergencies or disasters before they happen. Today, the urgency for Hamilton County residents to prepare for potential disasters has never been greater. It’s important that residents and their families prepare for a potential emergency at home, school, and work,” said Dawn Ford, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator at the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department. “Here at the Health Department, we are working hard to plan for possible health crises, from pandemic flu to an act of terrorism. Our observance of National Public Health Week is about educating residents on the role of public health during emergencies and encouraging residents and leaders to take steps to plan for health emergencies.”

During Public Health Week, the Health Department will be educating residents about what they can do to prepare effectively for a health crisis, as well as encouraging their employees to take a look into their own family preparedness planning.

“Public health in Hamilton County ensures access to basic health services for our residents on both a day-to-day and emergency basis,” said County Mayor Claude Ramsey. “We are proud of the work the Health Department has done to help our residents further prepare for health emergencies. In addition to their awareness campaign the Health Department is finalizing a county-wide pandemic flu plan, and has built our Medical Reserve Corps unit to over 2500 volunteers to deploy in case of an emergency.”

On Friday March 30, 2007 Health Department employees, health experts and community leaders will come together to identify opportunities to further prepare residents for public health emergencies.

Barbara Alexander of American Red Cross, Bruce Garner of Chattanooga Fire Department, and Dawn Ford of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department will be presenting a panel to Health Department employees on how individuals can take the first step for preparedness. The program, which will also feature Commissioner Larry Henry, will be held at 8:30 a.m. on Friday, March 30, in Golley Auditorium on the second floor of the Health Department.

The preparedness awareness campaign includes 3 simple steps to be ready for an emergency or disaster:

1. **Be Informed.** Learn what types of disasters or emergencies can happen where you live.
2. **Create a family disaster plan.** Discuss with your family your emergency evacuation plan, post emergency telephone numbers by phones, and teach your children how to call 9-1-1 for help.
3. **Keep an emergency kit with a 3 day supply.** The kit should include bottled water, canned food, flashlights and batteries, essential medications, and a first aid kit.

For more ideas on preparing for health emergencies, call the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department's Emergency Preparedness program at 209-8074, or visit the national website [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

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